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Review

If a Tree Falls: Business Students Learning Active Citizenship from Environmentalists

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Abstract: This article presents and discusses student assignments reflecting on the documentary film *If a Tree Falls*, written as part of the Business Ethics and Sustainability course at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. This article follows two lines of inquiry. First, it challenges mainstream environmental education, supporting critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy. These pedagogies, which advocate pedagogy for radical change, offer a distinct and valuable contribution to sustainability education, enabling students to critically examine normative assumptions, and learn about ethical relativity, and citizenship engagement from environmentalists. The discussion of “lessons of radical environmentalism” is pertinent to the question of what types of actions are likely to achieve the widely acceptable long-term societal change. While this article focuses on student reflection on a film about radical environmentalism, this article also discusses many forms of activism and raises the question of what can be considered effective activism and active citizenship in the context of the philosophy of (environmental or sustainability) education in connection didactics and curriculum studies. Second, this article argues for the need for reformed democracy and inclusive pluralism that recognizes the needs of nonhuman species, ecocentrism, and deep ecology. The connection between these two purposes is expressed in the design of the student assignment: It is described as a case study, which employs critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy.

Keywords: democracy; critical pedagogy; ecopedagogy; sustainability; radical environmentalism

1. Introduction

Protected areas are the foundation of biodiversity conservation, safeguarding nature and cultural resources, improving livelihoods and driving sustainable development [1]. However, protection of nature has never been as controversial and even dangerous, with hundreds of environmental activists (and citizens defending their homes from displacement) being attacked and even murdered, and many more jailed, mostly in developing countries [2]. In recent decades, hundreds of environmental activists have been murdered in South and Central America [2,3], particularly in Colombia [4] and in Brazil. Many anti-logging campaigners who have been murdered are members of indigenous groups [5,6]. In Africa, environmental activists became better known since the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Nigerian protestors against the oil industry [7], and there is a continuous suppression of grassroots groups [8]. The largest death toll in Africa includes conservation workers and park rangers killed by poachers, illegal (or legal!) loggers supported by corrupt officials [9–12]. Asia has also been a dangerous place for environmentalists, including incidents of environmentalists’ persecution in Vietnam and China (e.g., [13,14]). In Cambodia, the anti-logging campaigner Chutt Wutty was murdered, without fair investigation completed [15], with three other deaths in 2018, reportedly by poachers, still being investigated [16]. Campaigners from the NGO *Mother Nature Cambodia* face trials on suspicion of economic disruption [17,18]. Activists’ concerns and efforts to challenge the status

quo should be taken seriously, as an estimated 20% of the Amazon rainforest has been cleared in the last 60 years [19]. In other areas too forests are drastically cleared to make way for agricultural activities, including animal agriculture, which plays a significant role in deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and water pollution [20], constituting an estimated 26% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions [21]. Production of animal products is estimated to double by 2050 [22], with currently an estimated 70 billion land animals killed each year for food (excluding sea animals) [23]. Environmental protection and animal rights issues are thus increasingly interconnected.

Simultaneously, not just defense of the environment but individual animals are increasingly persecuted, and animal rights activists have been declared terrorists and incarcerated for animal liberation acts throughout Western Europe and North America [24]. The persecution of environmental and animal rights activists is becoming a global problem, with increasingly more governments adopting legal measures to silence and imprison activists [25].

One of the least publicized types of environmentalism is associated with groups labeled as “radical” by governments or the media [26,27]. The US government has applied the term “terrorist” and “radical” to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and Animal Liberation Front (ALF) [28–30] and the label “ecoterrorist” or “ecoterrorism” has fueled the persecution of animal and environmental activists. The term was coined in the 1980s as a response to the rapid and bold growth of environmental and animal rights movements and has been used by the industry to shift the public dialogue and frame activists as terrorists [24,31,32]. At the height of the “Green Scare”, the FBI labeled “ecoterrorism” as its number one domestic terrorism threat [25] but has since downgraded it to “one of the most serious domestic terrorism threats” [33].

Both ELF and ALF strive to cause no harm to humans and nonhumans as a core principle guiding their actions and instead use tactics such as arson and economic property damage to draw attention to corporate and government compliance in environmental destruction (Harden 2006) [34]. They disrupt activities that cause suffering and death of animals, for example by targeting animal testing laboratories [24,32]. It is important to mention that the tactics of animal rights activists are varied and diverse, from leafleting, nonviolent protests and demonstrations, public education, school visits and importantly carrying out undercover investigations that aim to make public the practices animal exploitation industries go to great lengths to hide [24,34]. Undercover investigations have resulted in actions against animal industries, including the prosecution of laboratory staff (e.g., [35]), and shutting down slaughterhouses (e.g., [36]). However, in efforts to persecute activists and protect “animal enterprises”, ag-gag laws have been proposed and passed in some US states, criminalising whistle-blowers and undercover activists [37] and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act is a legislation protecting “animal enterprises” and using “vague and overly broad” legislation to criminalise activist actions [38,39]. Similar legal measures have been passed in other countries, including the UK, where protection of animal testing facilities have received increased protection while making it easier to prosecute animal rights activists (Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005). Since Donald Trump’s presidency, the US government has intensified the persecution of environmental activists [40].

The case described in the documentary *If a Tree Falls* dates back to the pre-Trump arrests of environmental activists and raises questions about the role of citizenship and citizen’s ability to engage in legitimate action for change. Pertinent to the case of environmental education, this article inquires what “lessons” can be learned from environmentalists, government action and framing of terrorism and radicalism.

2. Active Citizenship, Critical Pedagogy and Ecopedagogy

Active citizenship education is based on an educational model known as “Action Research for Community Problem Solving”, which stimulates students to become actors in, for and with their communities [41]. Education for active global citizenship, addressing worldwide environmental and social issues, combined the focus on plural and democratic education with a sense of clear purpose and direction, instructed by the challenge and urgency of resolving the problems [42,43].

This approach to education was inspired by Paulo Freire's seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1997). In examining this book, Anthony Nocella stresses the importance of "striving for an engaging educational experience in the classroom or even learning about the revolutionary/liberation groups, societies, and collectives" [30]. The shortcoming of Freire's ideas has been highlighted by Corman [44], who aptly critiques his perpetuation of "a deeply anthropocentric and speciesist understanding of animals," highlighting the responsibility of critical educators to attend "to the particular and overwhelmingly negative constructions of nonhuman animals throughout the text." The main objective of eco-anarchists is to subvert all forms of political, economic and scientific monologist that is present both in the market ecology or green capitalism and in the ad hoc environmentalism of the social-democracies [45]. In the case of animal rights, speciesism, the underlying ideology that excludes nonhuman animals from the sphere of moral concern and legal protection [46], creates a category of billions of the oppressed, largely un- or misrepresented in education [47–49]. In their advocacy of 'revolutionary' pedagogy McLaren & Houston [50] "informed by a dialectics of ecological and environmental justice that highlights the situatedness of environmental conflict and injustice toward nonhuman nature" (p. 166), advocated defense of convicted ELF activists as they were seen as challenging the mainstream capitalist status quo.

However, the Marxist critique of capitalism has its shortcomings. Ecosocialism has been especially critical of naive narratives about finitude, scarcity, and conservationism [45], thus criticizing mostly social inequality in the distribution of wealth and not challenging the very mechanism of how this wealth is created – through the appropriation of natural resources. It must also be noted that Socialist or Communist countries do not have a better environmental record than capitalist ones, as their economic systems are still predicated on a growth paradigm and industrial development [51]. Nor do countries such as Vietnam or China (e.g., [13,14]) have a better record in the treatment of environmental protests as noted in the Introduction. While green Marxism rightly criticizes the capitalist system of industrial production, its (sometimes implicit) support for socialist or communist systems of organization fails to take into account the fact that contemporary industrial production systems, however socially ideologically organized, are still predicated on the exploitation of natural resources. What is significant in ecopedagogy is not so much its "red" origins in Marxist thought, but a call for a revolutionary different method of addressing the excesses of industrial development and anthropocentrism.

In a similar way, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) can "teach" students about the value of animals-not as objects, but as beings who have intrinsic value [27] and help overcome the misconceptions about ALF as a violent group that is perpetuated by the media by using a rhetoric of terrorism [52]. Nocella [52] argues that critical pedagogy can be used to understand ALF and "their history, culture and mission," which is "rooted in a concern for the suffering of nonhuman animals and peace." By bringing animal issues to the forefront of critical pedagogy, Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen [49] question what can education become "when humans are not regarded as the only subjects," laying the foundations of the growing field of critical animal pedagogy [53]. This provides an intersectional approach to the examination of social justice issues and oppression, highlighting the necessity to tie theory to action. Saari [46] notes that speciesism, dependent on its reproduction, normalizes exploitation of nonhuman animals and human-nonhuman animal hierarchy through conventional environmental education and welfare education. In fact, "although many educational proposals have been mobilized in response to the urgent need of social and environmental challenges, they have done so without the will to assume the transforming depth of ecocentrism, or understanding that the urgency of such responses could be complicated by the seemingly "cumbersome" discourse of the "civilizational and paradigm changes" [45]. In addition to critical animal pedagogies, other promising frameworks addressing "the impacts of current cultural habits that perpetuate the abuse of the world's ecosystems" include EcoJustice Education, which aims to help educators "facilitate the exploration, development, and implementation, of habits that support diverse, democratic and sustainable communities" [54].

Various forms of environmentalism each rest on "assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements" [55], but particularly eco-

bio- or zoo-centric viewpoints are important for a united critique of anthropocentric thinking [27,30,47]. Education that involves these viewpoints reaches far beyond what education for sustainability, environmental education, and particularly education for sustainable development have so far achieved. The relevance of a genuinely ecological, “deep” or “dark green” environmental education, as noted by Molina-Motos [45] is that this alternative ecopedagogy “assumes the singular contributions and dialogue between deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, the land ethic” that, in consort, provide robust foundations for the paradigm shift. While deep ecology [56] highlights the intrinsic value of nonhuman beings and the environment, it is shallow ecology, recognizing human dependency on the environment and stressing its material value for human prosperity, that is more prominent in mainstream environmental education and education for sustainable development [47,57]. Molina-Motos [45] reflects that to address deep ecology, environmental education should “produce new knowledge from the uniqueness of pedagogical thinking and the essential role it plays in the knowledge production of our societies”. Pedersen [48], Saari [46], and Spannring [58] argue that the hierarchical status quo is not challenged but supported by the notion of the *humane* use of nonhuman animals, pertinent to welfare education, traditional forms of environmental education and education for sustainable development. The status quo needs to be challenged by education, aptly argued by Pedersen [48], who calls for a cessation of relating to animals through our narcissistic preoccupation with animals-for-us. Exploring such trajectories in ESD and beyond, across subject-specific curricula and in age-appropriate manners, implies making the immanent critique a foundation and condition for political and environmental engagement in human-animal relations. It could even imply the practice of a different kind of critical pluralism, in the sense of opening education to multiple unthought possibilities of unlearning and re-learning our being in the world as standing with, staying away, and stepping aside.

The different kinds of critical pluralism, as Pedersen [48] suggests, is different from the common discussion of pluralism prevalent in the environmental education field, as this pluralism (sometimes referred to as democratic) refers to a single dominant species’ decision-making. By contrast, inclusive pluralism [57] would refer to multispecies stakeholders, involved in decision-making through the process of eco-representation through human proxies [59]. Posthumanist scholars have also questioned traditional notions of democracy, which systematically exclude animals and call for a rethinking of what democracy means and who or what can be part of public [60,61].

Borrero [62] argues that democracy in real practice has been transformed into mere mechanisms for the legitimization of the business-as-usual by governments, with elections stimulating the competition among groups of elites, with common voters treated as consumers for a political market. Rozzi’s [62] concern is that, as currently practiced, the democratic mechanisms make the impression of broad popular participation, while in reality the decisions are made by small but powerful economic minorities, mirrored in the case of education by Davis and Bansel [63]. They argue that educational institutions are constantly at risk of indoctrination into neoliberal values through corporate sponsorship, but also through a common curriculum that aims to develop certain “useful” skills in students, shaped by the dominant ideology of economic growth as a prerequisite of social development [63].

However, caution needs to be exercised here, as there are few pragmatic solutions offered to how commonly held elective practices can be “government of the people, *by* the people, *for* the people” and how they can avoid being subordinated to the interests of the “elites”. Another concern is how human elections can take the interests of non-human species into account, as common democracy tends to be anthropocentric [55,59], and the interests of nonhumans are often overlooked due to a myriad of other social and economic interests recognized in democratic societies [64]. The “democratic” environmental education and education for sustainable development has come to signify plural and open opinions, questioning authority, in some cases even to the exclusion of expertise [64], resulting at times in the kind of “anything-goes-relativism” [42].

In fact, supporters of pluralism in education, as discussed by Wals [42] and Kopnina and Cherniak [57], branch out into those who promote openness of opinions as a panacea for neoliberal

ideology, and those that are skeptical of *all* ideologies, including that of education *for* sustainability as it is potentially seen as authoritative and indoctrinating.

3. Methodology

There were 290 bachelor students of International Business enrolled into the Business Ethics and Sustainability course between January and May 2019 at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. The assignment presented in this article was one of five assignments, aiming to introduce students to general ethical theories, including environmental ethics and business ethics. The course is described in the syllabus: “Ethical and sustainable management requires a blending of social, natural and financial capital to create a business model for the future. Business Ethics and Sustainability course recognizes opportunities for innovation and impact at the intersection of ethics and environmental, economic and social systems”.

The documentary *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* was shown to students. The ELF carried out a five-year wave of arson and economic sabotage attacks from 1996 to 2001, which caused no human victims but resulted in an estimated \$23 million in damage to lumber companies, a ski resort, meat plants, a wild horse “processing” factory, and federal ranger stations [34]. A multi-agency criminal investigation known as Operation Backfire coordinated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation resulted in convictions and incarceration of several ELF and ALF group members in 2002 [34]. One of the activists committed suicide in prison in 2005 [65]. The documentary follows Daniel McGowan, one of the ELF activists, who was arrested with other activists after a series of arson, property destruction, and economic sabotage attacks. The documentary culminates with McGowan’s trial charged with terrorism and subsequent sentencing to 7 years in a special high-security prison.

After watching the documentary at home (available on YouTube), the students were asked to write a 1000-word reflection using a six-step approach:

- Step 1: Film details: title, name of the director, etc.
- Step 2: Purpose of the film: what is the message the director wants to convey?
- Step 3: Prior knowledge: did you know anything about the topic before watching the movie?
- Step 4: Synopsis: the main events.
- Step 5: Personal comments: Reflect on the movie from your perspective, validating your comments with relevant arguments and specific details/scenes from the movie. Argue critically what you did and did not like about the movie. Do you think the director achieved his goals in terms of getting the message across to his audience? What did you learn in terms of morality? Do you think this movie is effective in informing and convincing the audience about the ethical issues involved? Will you recommend it to friends?
- Step 6: Application of ethical theory and relevant chapter materials: reflect on the ethical issues on relevant topics, e.g., human rights, social and ecological justice, animal rights, abuse of power, etc.). Discuss which ethical theories can be applied (consequentialist, non-consequentialism, etc.) within the context of the movie.

A random selection of four reflections of assignments submitted in reverse chronological order that the students have submitted their assignments is presented below. While this is a small random sample, the choice of four essays presented in full was made due to the fact that the presentation of qualitative data is space-intensive, and the authors have chosen for a more complete presentation of results rather than an abridged and schematic presentation of almost two hundred essays. While choosing for this type of qualitative research presents some challenges, as the data are collected from a few cases so findings cannot be generalized to a larger population, they can still be valid in a sense of being “an accurate representation of the phenomena they are intended to represent” [66] and transferable to another setting.

Some segments were abridged (shortened) in cases of wordiness, repetitions or redundancies, and the researcher for clarity edited some segments. All the areas in the text that have been edited are

indicated in square brackets. The editing strictly involved readability (comprehension), most of the original grammar, spelling, and style (aside from cursory Grammarly program check) were retained. The essays were analyzed using the content analysis method.

4. Case Study: Student Reflections on the Film *If a Tree Falls*

4.1. Student 1

The purpose of the documentary is to question whether terrorism can be described as an action where someone is making property damage in a way, which is not causing any injury or death for innocent people. The director also wants to make people determine the phrase of “eco-terrorism” and what would be the actions that can be prosecuted in the name of “eco-terrorism”. Furthermore, the director’s message to the audience is that these people had a normal childhood with a normal background instead of judging them instantly as a terrorist because they did not commit these crimes as a basis of vandalism but rather with reasonable motives against companies which were abusing native forests.

My prior knowledge about arsons was very confined. All I knew before was that people who are committing arsons are either looking [for] excitement or [for] payback for something that they are seeing or finding as injustice actions.

When U.S. Attorney started their investigation against ELF, they gave a chance for defendants to start co-operating with the investigation to walk away from charges if they can help for bringing ELF cells down. However, McGowan had decided that he will stick to the plan, which was not to snitch about other members of the group. Nevertheless, it turned out that some of the defendants took the deal and turned their back to others. I find this extremely unethical and against my morality. Bill Barton, of the Native Forest Council, has worked many years as a logger, gave an interesting interview about radical environmentalists. According to him, companies tend to state these arsonists as eco-terrorist even though companies themselves are the ones who have cut 95 percent of native forests. Barton argues that companies, which are only thinking about the profit, which they gain for logging trees, are radical and not the people who are trying hard to save the last five percent of remaining trees. I share the same way of thinking with Barton. When ELF burned the horse slaughterhouse to the ground, the very same company was never again able to continue its business operation. Local people had tried over ten years to have a different kind of demonstrations against the company without success. The point is that I don’t agree with the arson actions by any means but I am still amazed how powerful arson is to get something to do. I don’t either accept the actions, which the police were using; when they crossed the line by using away too much pepper spray and violent actions against demonstrators. In my opinion, they could have just taken those people into custody for 24 h and then release them with the condition not to commit any further demonstration. One old woman, who was participating in the World Trade Organization protest, stated: “Vandalism is vandalism. Destruction is destruction. Whether it’s of lives or property, it’s not acceptable”, and in my view, this is the baseline of extermination. The only distinction comes when some actions are more violent and fierce than others and therefore, vandalism and destruction judgment should be different and always dependent on the case. This documentary did not change my understanding of ethics even though my comprehension of arsons is broader now.

Ed Begley Jr. stated that “I don’t understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something by nature we call it progress.” This quote sums up very well the whole ideology behind [. . .] ELF. Radical activists such as ELF tend to justify their actions [believing] that without illegal actions against governments and companies the life on earth ceases to exist eventually.

The ethical theory of consequentialism can be applied [. . .] The idea [. . .] is that morality is something that concerns the consequences of human action and not the actions themselves. However, [. . .] some actions that are made in the name of consequentialism can be very dreadful.

4.2. Student 2

The film is made to create conscience about a topic that [...] until today is [...] very important in society. Also, it [...] shows that a group with good ideas [can] be terrorists because of their unethical way of acting as well as the bad handle of the government and authorities. It shows important environmental and political issues. The message here is that ideas should be manifested but not getting into vandalism or violence, should be more peaceful otherwise, you can be harming the property and good of good people and that should not accept. Also, like the Lumberman said: "I need trees to continue with my business, I'll not go and cut every[thing] because I'll lose the business ... ". The director wants to get everybody to think about this complicated and important matter and grow an opinion about the concern of the Earth.

I didn't know anything about the ELF groups and all the movements in the United States for protecting the planet and how far it got, to violence and prisoners. [...] I did not imagine that there was a group considered to be terrorists because their ways of manifestation, burning properties (according to Daniel there was never people inside). [...]

The moral arguments were not that moral after all, the ELF was thinking about the wealth of the planet but forgetting the wealth of people, doing vandalism in the streets lead the citizens to feel threaten and scare. In my opinion, you cannot act with an incomplete image of all the consequences you can produce in innocent people.

Personal Comments: A few years ago, in Peru, we had a situation like the one shown in the movie, the famous movement against the mine called "Conga" that was going to destroy a lake to extract all minerals. The people of the place start manifesting that basing their arguments in the contamination of their principal source of water, this conflict got that advance and violent, some people died. I think that a country to grow it is necessary to use the natural resources, the competitive advantage, but these resources need to be used with care and responsibility, something that will not happen if the government is not strict about the laws. In the scenario of ELF, I don't agree with their way of acting towards the conflict and government, I don't think violence and vandalism can lead to good solutions that can everyone benefits. Also, I do not agree with the way of how the government acted, they just turned against the ELF group without considering the argument that there is maybe been some bad use of resources [...]; many times, interests and politics lead the actions of the government. For the other side, I do agree with some of the ideals of the ELF, there is the need for a politic change, I can relate this to my country so much because we are not advanced at all in sustainability and ethics, starting for the government; corruption is the mother of failure. I do think the director achieved his goal of open the eyes of the audience and achieve to show the message completely. I learned that moral ethics can be very different for each person due to their different ways of thinking. This video, it's an example of how a conflict should not manage, both sides, the police, and the ELF; so I do think it's a good way to show the public about all the ethical issues, its really a film that I would recommend.

In terms of moral and ethical issues, we have seen many different approaches. I think is impossible to established on universal moral code of ethics because there is not a strict definition of good or wrong according to everyone thought [...] In this video I think that the ethical issue [...] is the abuse of power, because the government never gave ELF the opportunity to be heard and just consider them terrorists and treat them like those, being also violent. In the context of the movie, the ethical theory that it can better be applied is the consequentialist because they know that violence and vandalism are not a moral thing, but they thought that the consequences of the results would be positive, that's why ELF saw vandalism and violence as an option.

4.3. Student 3

With this documentary, Marshall Curry tries to show the audience all sides of the story behind these so-called "eco-terrorist attacks". On the one side, he wants to inform the public of the background of the attacks as well as the planning that goes into them in order not to endanger any human life. On the other side, we also get insight from several people within the police and FBI as well as,

sometimes innocent, victims of the crimes. The film aims to get people talking about this issue again and in a greater scheme of things about all of mankind's interaction with Mother Nature. The viewer gets insight on both sides of the spectrum and should be able to formulate his own opinion on the issue upon viewing.

Before watching this great documentary, I must admit that I had close to no prior knowledge of the existence of the Earth Liberation Front. The issues of deforestation and a general lack of care towards the environment have been things I was familiar with, however, the extreme steps a single group of individuals would take to protect the environment and incriminate themselves while doing so were news to me. I used to be under the impression that environmentalist groups were reserved for peaceful protesting instead of such radical actions as undertaken by the ELF.

The main issue is the definition of the term "terrorists", especially when taking into consideration that no human life had been harmed during the multiple attacks, and the questioning of the effectiveness of traditional peaceful protests. The moral argument of the ELF was that peaceful protesting had been ignored and undermined by authorities for too long, so they realized to change the world, they had to change the rules first. This lets the viewer understand that these were not random acts of terrorism but rather carefully planned attacks against the system. After finishing the documentary, you can still be opposed to the group's actions, however, you cannot claim that these attacks were chaos for the sake of chaos.

I very much enjoyed the movie because of the unbiased stance it took on this issue. Marshall Curry is not trying to manipulate people. He is merely informing the public and letting them form their own opinions. I very much believe that the director got across the message of the film very well while not pushing it too directly into the faces of the audience. Is this terrorism? Can peaceful protest change anything effectively? If you ask these questions to people that saw the movie, I believe, you will get lots of different answers. As well, that is good because there is no simple answer to these problems. There are just too many factors that must be considered when it comes to the environmental challenges that this generation is faced with. When I watched the movie, I changed my opinion on these topics from minute to minute. At first, I could not believe that I have not heard of this radical and dangerous group before but after getting to know their motives and themselves I began to appreciate their courage to try and change the system we live in. In the end, I still do not think that their approach to the issue was the right one, but I am having a hard time labeling a group of people with good intentions that have not harmed a single person with their actions as "terrorists". I think this quote from the movie describes my feelings towards this issue perfectly:

"I'm okay with cutting down trees. I'm not okay with cutting them all down. The industry tends to call the environmentalists radical. The reality is that 95% of the standing native forests in the United States have been cut down. It's not radical to try and save the last 5%—what's radical is logging 95%!"

This movie is a great example of an effective way to inform the public better on important issues that have been oversimplified by mainstream media. It gives great insights on both sides of the story and is an enjoyable, yet somehow depressing, watch with friends and family that gets your brain cells working.

We can see the ethical dilemma with the emotivist actions of the ELF. In the minds of the group they acted within the means of consequentialism, meaning their actions themselves are not good but due to the consequences of there being one less "evil" company in the business, they accept them as ethically correct. Another ethical issue is the acting of the companies that were attacked. They get targeted due to their lack of corporate social responsibility and general anthropocentric way of business. Lastly, something that has shocked me very much was the abuse of human rights by the police in violently shutting down peaceful protests. These scenes might not have taken center stage in the movie, but police brutality remains a major issue during environmental protests.

4.4. Student 4

Before watching the movie, I have already heard about it. When I saw that choice in the syllabus, I certainly selected that documentary. Then, just before seeing the movie, I did a quick research about *If a Tree Falls*. I collected some information about the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Found. I also read the comments from some movie critics [...] ELF was trying to make people aware of the companies, which had cut the 1000-year-old trees, destroyed the forests, nature and biological habitats of animals so ELF was protesting according to these dynamics. Without leaving any hint and evidence in their actions, they enforced the FBI. ELF [...] split people because of the lawsuits for their members. Some of the people thought that these members were terrorists and the other part of the people thought the opposite. Also [...] members of ELF who were tried and convicted by the Federal Jurisdiction (US) just like the people that were convicted for the September 11 attacks. In that period, people were intimidated by the harshest punishments by the government. Whatever the result, they raised awareness about protecting nature and taking actions against the system and it is an undeniable fact.

Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front were both in a very critical and special political point, which would make the definition of “violence” suspiciously, queried. When I learned the aims of actions and stories of activists, I can say that I have queried the definition of “violence” naturally. That is why there is a discourse of ecological terror in some capitalist countries, which think the most fundamental reason for existence is the imposition of the right of dispossession under the definition of the freedom of ownership.

I may say that we do not have a right to have all-natural and use it. We, as humans, do not have a right to destroy the habitats. Although, the law secures the opposite. By implication, this documentary is a call, which points the responsible. *If a Tree Falls* says that our world is being destroyed, that the people engaged in civil disobedience actions [...] are nam[ed] “radicals” and “terrorists”.

To sum up, *If a Tree Falls* is a masterpiece because of its special story which revolts against the human power [over] nature [...] It is crystal clear to see that there is an attack on human rights and ecological justice. The behavior of policemen to the people and the moments they lived in jail are unacceptable. The companies had destroyed the 1000-year-old trees, forests, animal life, habitats, and nature. As it has mentioned about this situation in Chapter 4 of our book, *Sustainable Business “Key Issues”*; it is stated that normally economic growth usually requires the extinction of animal life and actions in opposition to this growth by the anti-pollution activists of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) in the US was identified as terrorism during the 1990 s. As Ed Begley Jr. has stated: I don’t understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something by nature we call it progress. It is so clear to see what has happened and how it affected the world objectively. In this case, the period that they had are worldwide events and everyone’s issue. In Chapter 2, *Environmental Challenges*, it has also been stated by Arno Naess that the world health, issues about inequalities and social justice, equitable apportioning of wealth, intergenerational justice, human rights and the obliteration of poorness are the important parts of altruistic worries; while environmental advantages and disadvantages such as describing species and habitats as “[re]sources” [are] the concerns of shallows ecology. In the second explanation, saving the beneficial regions is just for the obtaining of raw materials, farming, city parking and ecotourism. [...]

According to these definitions of ideologies, it can easily be understood that which side has adopted which view. Consequentialism can be defined as an ethical theory that is mostly taken up seriously by non-religious people and it explains the results of human activities while it gives lessons about what people should produce the hugest amount of decent results. Consequentialism [...] is the most suitable theory within the context of the documentary.

5. Results

In the context of Business Ethics and Sustainability, students' comments relating to normative assumptions and ethical relativity are particularly relevant. Student 1 reflected on how definitions of terrorism and radicalism are ambiguous, especially as the motives for certain actions were dictated by the belief or experience that they are more efficient in achieving certain aims than alternative actions (student 1 noted: "When ELF burned the horse slaughterhouse to the ground, the very same company was never again able to continue its business operation. Local people had tried over ten years to have a different kind of demonstrations against the company without success." Student 3 wrote about actions that occurred because of "questioning of the effectiveness of traditional peaceful protests"). This raises the question about what can be considered "effective" activism and active citizenship-how can narratives like these be used to open up discussion on the problems presented in the film and discuss how do we create change in society. Student 1 found certain perspectives presented in the film that were not voiced by the environmentalists, but by people like Bill Barton, who has been employed by the Native Forest Council as a logger (student 2 called him "the Lumberman"), quite revealing of alternative vision of what radicalism is ("Barton argues that companies, which are only thinking about the profit, which they gain for logging trees, are actually radical and not the people who are trying hard to save the last five percent of remaining trees"). Student 1 also argued that actions and motives need to be understood and judged in context ("vandalism and destructions judgment should be different and always dependent on the case"). Student 3 is also impressed by Barton's exclamation about the remaining trees: "It's not radical to try and save the last 5%—what's radical is logging 95%!"

For student 2, vandalism needs to be understood in the context of planet and people, and this student finds that the ELF went too far "thinking about the wealth of the planet but forgetting the wealth of people". In this context, terrorism – or terror, fear, is indeed related to "vandalism in the streets lead the citizens to feel threaten and scare". On the other hand, like student 1, student 2 felt that they could agree with some actions or beliefs of ELF, as "there is the need for a politic change". Student 2 also felt that the situation or moral standing needs to be seen from different sides ("I learned that moral an ethics can be very different for each person due their different ways of thinking" or "impossible to established on universal moral code of ethics because there is not a strict definition of good or wrong according to everyone"), some of the lessons of the film and the activists could be applied to his own (developing) country, as this student writes: "I can relate this to my country so much because we are not advanced at all in sustainability and ethics". It is significant to note that as discussed in the introduction, corruption and lawlessness in developing countries leads to violent deaths of many environmental protectors, as noted by the Global Witness Report (2018) [2]. Like student 1, student 2 thought that consequentialism explains, if not justifies ELF's actions: "consequentialist because they know that violence and vandalism is not a moral thing, but they thought that the consequences of the results would be positive". Similarly, student 3 notes that the ethic can be seen as both as "emotivist" and consequentialism, writing: "meaning their actions themselves are not good but due to the consequences of there being one less "evil" company in business".

Three students' in the sample understanding of environmental activism are linked with US politics and discussion of state's disputable authority on violence, while, as discussed in the introduction, environmental protest and suppression are global issues. One of the students raises a similar concern about Peru. Also, all students reflect that the issues that environmentalists confront are not specifically American, but have to do with the power of corporate or political organizations, with student 3 emphasizing the global nature of the issues in "a greater scheme of things about all of mankind's interaction with Mother Nature". Student 3 particularly emphasizing that the nature of the protest was peaceful and that the label of terrorism is questionable in this context. The same student also notes that the reaction of the police was disproportionate to the nature of government response and that one can speak of "abuse of human rights by the police in violently shutting down peaceful protests".

Student 4 also emphasizes the violation of human rights, as well as mentions ecological justice ("there is an attack on human rights and ecological justice"). A larger vision of "the system" (industrial,

controlled by powerful political and corporate interests) is emerging even in this small sample of assignments. Student four reflected that the actions of ELF and ALF were “very critical and [made a] special political point, which would make the definition of “violence” suspicious”. Student 4 also explicitly mentioned this critique about capitalist countries, “which think the most fundamental reason for existence is the imposition of the right of dispossession under the definition of the freedom of ownership”. Student 4 also demonstrates some background knowledge of the difference between shallow and deep ecology, referring to Arne Naess’ writing, that “the world health, issues about inequalities and social justice, equitable apportioning of wealth, intergenerational justice, human rights and the obliteration of poorness are the important parts of altruistic worries; while [. . .] describing species and habitats as “[re]sources” [are] the concerns of shallows ecology”.

6. Discussion

Student views do demonstrate at least the beginning of a certain shift in consciousness, or what Molina-Motos [45] describes as a vision that questions “many of the basic pillars of the belief system that sustain the anthropocentric morality of our time”. In education, critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy could help students explore the importance of representing non-human others, as well as critically discussing the practice of democracy in its conventional form. Critical thinking and dialogue are core tenets of the approach advocated in this paper and including various perspectives are essential to eco-literacy. Educations transformations can be possible if “our foundational assumptions” based on anthropocentrism are “made explicit, interrupted, and shifted” and “we learn to think differently about our relationship to each other and the natural world” [54].

As discussed in the Introduction, in political and societal discourse this has been known to lead to opinions presented as facts and found equally legitimate, because they are democratic. Doubts about, for example, climate change science are being replaced by doubts about the motives of scientists and their political supporters [67]. In some cases, the wisdom of a true people’s democracy (if such a thing existed) can be perhaps questioned in terms of the outcomes of reliance on the rule of the majority that might be uninformed, but even more importantly, unmotivated to act to solve global environmental challenges such as climate change [64]. Also, the public’s understanding of environmental challenges often lacks complex time-scale, as global issues such as climate change, “need to be understood within time spans of some hundred years or more” [68], and thus long-term thinking is required. This long-term thinking is not guaranteed by simply assuming that democratic or plural systems will challenge short-term economic or neoliberal thinking.

One could certainly argue that without political hegemonies and economic power players that influence democratic processes, the people (collectively) will be caring and well-informed and will make the “right” (or the “good”) decisions that would profit the environment and the most vulnerable people, but the discussion of the inherent goodness and wisdom of people and their ability to rule themselves go back to the classic philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato, or more recently, Hobbes and Locke, some trusting the populace to rule themselves (to some degree), some not, and is far from being resolved. So far, no living democracies or, for that matter, autocracies, have shown much ecological wisdom, at least as far as consumption practices are concerned. Still, to recall the maxim often attributed to Churchill, democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those that have been tried before. In the context of this article, that democracy that does not persecute its citizens as radicals but is open to dialogue, allowing them to have a say in actual decision-making processes, might be the best kind. While this type of permissive democracy may indeed protect some environmentalists, however, it still might fall short of eco-representation [59].

This is especially problematic as, in the context of ecopedagogy, we can speak of environmentalists as potential revolutionary “teachers”, experts on critical thinking and forceful and active instructors [27]. In cases when all opinions are treated equally, however, the influence of corporate marketing, self-serving media, and disinterested government on shaping public opinion that climate change is a hoax [67] is under-estimated. The public might not find it important to resolve biodiversity crises because the

same media ignores the issue, or because the destruction of habitat is not seen as having a direct impact on one's purse. This shared public ignorance or compliance might easily come into conflict with any teacher who says that species extinction or climate change is real and we need to act to resolve it. In reflecting upon the controversy about shooting wolves in Canada's Yukon area, Jickling [69], employed at the time as a teacher in a local school, felt that advocating for wolf protection would be "neither practically viable nor educationally justifiable" (p. 92). Jickling mentions the fact that some of the parents of students in this community were hunters but explained his reluctance to take a pro-wolf stand, as a teacher he felt he needed to stay neutral to teach students democratic and open values and avoid indoctrination. This, we should note, is an example opposite to what ecopedagogy suggests. Ecopedagogy implies that we should be critical of claims that teaching is "neutral", as opting not to include pro-wolf arguments as Jickling does might not be an example of neutrality, but of conforming to the status quo. The documentary about radical environmentalists have shown, at least in this small sample, that students can learn about the possibility of confronting ecological injustice by critically evaluating options and limitations for legitimate and effective action.

7. Conclusions

Documentaries can be a useful tool to introduce activist narratives and raise the question of what can environmentalists (and animal rights activists) teach us about active citizenship. As seen in the student reflections, the documentary raises questions of what can be considered "effective" activism to create systemic change in public perception and challenge anthropocentric values. The various opinions presented in the documentary offer students an opportunity not just to demonstrate the importance of critical thinking but also to reflect on their positioning as business students, as active citizens, and as individuals with the stake in the future. As noted in the documentary, one reason for the downfall of ELF was differing ideas of how to create change and what tactics to use. George [70] proposes that for transformational change to happen, it is important to use critical dialogue to build effective alliances "that pave the way to cooperative existence," which in turn can "help us discover new possibilities for mobilization, inclusion, and justice" [70]. The reflection on the viewing of the documentary provides students with an opportunity to assess these possibilities, and make a start in the direction of evaluating how a category of "radicalism" is constructed. Despite the anthropocentric and speciesist bias of traditional critical pedagogy, it nevertheless offers useful tools worthy of consideration and serves as foundational tools for alternative approaches including ecopedagogy and critical animal pedagogy. As discussed here through the case of student assignments, while critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy promote active citizenship, and encourage students to be critical and active participants in decision-making, it also stresses knowledge and motivation. Ecopedagogy supports eco-literacy, as well as an understanding of broader social processes that are responsible for the creation of anti-environmental, economy-centered perspectives. Deep ecology and ecopedagogy demonstrate the need to reform democratic processes to include nonhuman voices and perspectives. The problematic role of language in the vilification of activists is highly pertinent today with the climate crisis, which requires urgent action and for us to question what is radical-trying to save the last tree or making a profit.

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